

Contents

List of Illustrations	vii
Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction: A Chu Text	xi
Chapter 1. Words and Images	1
Chu Ancestral Names and the Word for Birth	5
A Lost Word for Birth	9
Suggestive Images	11
Chapter 2. Controlling Reproduction: Fertility Prayers	21
Zhou Fertility Prayers in Bronze Inscriptions	23
A Warring States Prayer Preserved on Bamboo Strips	29
Chapter 3. Mothers and Embryos	43
Embryonic Transformation	47
Chapter 4. Controlling the Pregnant Body	53
Time and Divination	53
Curses, Stars, and the Gendered Cosmos	63
Sequestering	68
A Question of Thorns	73
Chapter 5. Divine Origins and Chu Genealogical History	75
Gender-Bending	89
Chapter 6. The Traumatic Births of Non-Zhou Ancestral Founders	93

vi / Contents

Conclusion	109
Notes	111
Bibliography	131
Index	149